

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 898

INFO AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, AGRI, CF, US

SUBJECT: CONGOLESE AGRICULTURAL PROJECT

1. DURING MARCH, RESPONSIVE TO GENERAL US DESIRE TO ASSIST RURAL POOR, GOCB MINISTRY OF RURAL ECONOMY (AGRICULTURE) PREPARED PROJECT TARGETING MOST PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL GROUPINGS IN EACH OF THE COUNTRY'S NINE REGIONS. WITH AN INVESTMENT OF ROUGLY 1.3 MILLION DOLLARS, GOCB ESTIMATES THAT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THESE PROVEN UNITS COULD BE TREBLED WITHIN ONE YEAR.

2. RECOMMENDATION OF ADO/YAOUNDE, WITH WHOM CHARGE DISCUSSED PROJECT IN LATE MARCH, WAS TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM US VOLUNTARY AGENCY. ACCORDINGLY, CHARGE SPOKE WITH AMBASSADOR SMYTHE, WHO RECOMMENDED WE CONTACT CARE. CARE REP ELLIS FRANKLIN TRAVELLED TO BRAZZAVILLE LAST WEEK AND, JOINED BY SUMMER INTERN MCLAUGHLIN AND CONGOLESE RURAL ECONOMY OFFICIAL, TOURED PORTION OF AREAS WHICH WOULD BE AFFECTED. FOLLOWING ARE MCLAUGHLIN'S OBSERVATIONS CONCURRED IN BY FRANKLIN:

3. GENERALLY, THE JULY 17-21 EXCURSION WAS PRODUCTIVE AND IMPRESSIVE FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, THE SOILS AND WEATHER OF THE THREE REGIONS (NIARI, LEKOU MOU AND BOUENZA)

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COMBINE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO PROVIDE A RARE AND FERTILE TESTING GROUND FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PROJECT AND, SECOND, THE POLITICAL CLIMATE PROVED EQUALLY GRACIOUS.

4. THE CONGOLESE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIZED A PORTION OF THE TRAIN FARES, SUPPLIED A VEHICLE FOR THE ROAD PORTION OF THE TRIP AND LENT THE SERVICES OF AUGUSTE MATSIMOUNA

FROM THE MINISTRY OF RURAL ECONOMY AS A KNOWLEDGEABLE GUIDE. IN EACH OF THE THREE MAJOR TOWNS ON THE ROUTE (LOUBOMO, MOSSENDJO AND SIBITI), THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES WERE WITHOUT EXCEPTION HOSPITABLE AND VERY INTERESTED IN THE NATURE OF A CARE-TYPE PROJECT. THIS WARM RECEPTION WAS FELT PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY AS IT WAS UNCHARACTERISTIC FOR ONLY THE FIRST CONTACT.

5. IN LOUBOMO, THE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER OF THE AGRICULTURALLY RICH NIARI REGION, THE REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR, DANIEL BOUSSIENQUE, ORGANIZED THE INTRODUCTIONS TO ALL LOCAL OFFICIALS, AND THE TRANSPORTATION. IN ADDITION, HE ARRANGED FOR BERNARD MOUSSOKI, THE CHIEF ADVISOR FOR THE REGION'S COOPERATIVES, TO ACCOMPANY THE TEAM.

6. THE THREE DAYS WERE SPENT ALTERNATELY SPEAKING TO THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AGENTS AND VISITING ABOUT TEN DIFFERENT AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE UNITS. THE FORMER GROUP IS GENERALLY WELL-TRAINED, BUT HINDERED BY TOO LITTLE EQUIPMENT, USUALLY NO VEHICLES AND FAR TOO MANY FARMERS. ALBERT MOUDILOU, THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AGENT IN JOSSENDJO, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS THE JOB OF ATTENDING TO THE NEEDS OF 78 DIFFERENT COOPERATIVES (RANGING FROM 20 TO 75 MEMBERS EACH), WITH ONLY THREE LOCAL MONITORS TO ASSIST HIM. FURTHER, HE ATTEMPTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS INCREDIBLE TASK WITH NO TRANSPORTATION.

7. THE MODEL FOLLOWED BY THE COOPERATIVES IN THESE REGIONS IS FAIRLY TYPICAL OF THE OTHER APPROXIMATELY 2000 COOPERATIVE UNITS IN THE CONGO. THE PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY IS CROP CULTIVATION (COFFEE, RICE, CORN, CACAO, BANANAS AND GROUND NUTS), WITH ONLY A SMATTERING OF SMALL ANIMAL RAISING (PIGS, CHICKENS AND SOME PIGEONS) BEING IN EVIDENCE. THE MEMBERS RESERVE AT LEAST 2-4 DAYS PER WEEK FOR THE COMMUNAL FIELDS, WITH THE REMAINING TIME BEING SPENT ON THEIR PERSONAL PLOTS. SOME UNITS, HOWEVER, ARE APPROACHING A POINT WHERE 100 PERCENT OF THEIR WORK WILL BE FOR THE COOPERATIVE.

8. ALMOST ALL GROUPS WERE MARKED BY THE SAME PROBLEMS: LACK OF RELIABLE SEED VARIETIES, FERTILIZERS, FUNGICIDES, TOOLS, SMALL EQUIPMENT AND PROPER STORAGE FACILITIES; AN ALMOST NONEXISTENT SYSTEM OF AGRICULTURAL CREDIT; CHRONICALLY UNDERSTAFFED EXTENSION SERVICES; INEFFICIENT GRADING, MARKETING AND PRICING SCHEMES AND; LITTLE DIRECT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT.

9. EVIDENT FROM THE ABOVE REMARKS, THE SITUATION IN THE CONGO APPEARS TO BE RIGHT FOR THE PROJECT PROPOSED TO CARE. THESE ARE THE TYPES OF PROBLEMS THAT CARE IS ADEPT AT REDRESSING AND, IN FACT, CARE HAS A HISTORY OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS IN JUST SUCH ENVIRONMENTS. THEIR EFFORTS LIKELY WOULD BEGIN WITH A SMALL STAFF, TWO AGRICULTURAL TECHNICIANS AND ONE ADMINISTRATOR, WORKING WITH A COUNTERPART IDENTIFIED BY THE CONGOLESE. THE FOCUS OF THE PROJECT WOULD BE TO INCREASE PRODUCTION THROUGH THE DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS AND EXPERTISE TO THE FARMER COOPERATIVES, THE "POOREST OF THE POOR." AFTER THE INITIAL 4-6 WEEK DESIGN PHASE, THE PROJECT COULD BE OPERATIONAL BY 1 NOVEMBER 1978.

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10. COMMENT: CHARGE LOOKS FORWARD TO DISCUSSING THIS PROJECT IN DEPARTMENT AT TIME OF ANTICIPATED AUGUST CONSULTATIONS. END COMMENT.
KATZEN

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